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ABSTRACT

A 24-item questionnaire--Attitudes Toward the Teaching of English--was administered to 34 cooperating teachers and their 34 student teachers from the University of Kentucky. The questionnaire was administered to both groups as a pretest and to student teachers as a posttest. This study investigated the influence of cooperating teachers toward the teaching of English. Results from the pre- and posttests were statistically analyzed. It was found that cooperating teachers did influence the attitudes of student teachers toward the teaching of English. In this study, the influence was in the direction of a more progressive attitude toward the teaching of English. It is recommended that a careful selection of cooperating teachers within teacher education programs be made. (Three tables of statistical data are presented along with a copy of the questionnaire.) (BRB)

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF COOPERATING TEACHERS IN SHAPING THE ATTITUDES OF STUDENT TEACHERS TOWARD THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

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Much criticism has been made of teacher education programs by those both within and without the teaching profession. Little agreement, if any, is found regarding aspects of professional education considered indispensable. All concerned persons throughout the years, however, appear to agree that one indispensable aspect of professional education does exist: student teaching. In the Preface to his book Student Teaching (copyright, 1940, 1949), Raleigh Schorling states: "Student teaching always has been and is likely to continue to be the most important phase of the professional education of prospective teachers."[1]

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[1] Raleigh Schorling, Student Teaching (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1949), p. X.

According to Florence Stratemeyer and Margaret Lindsey, few factors contributing to the development of skillful and artistic teachers are more important than the first hand contacts with young people in school provided by the student teaching experience in teacher education programs.[2] Its value goes almost unchallenged: "Student teaching is almost universally accepted as the most dynamic phase of teacher education."[3] Dean George E. Dickson, College of Education, The University of Toledo, writes in the Foreword to the 1967 Education Comment: On Student Teaching, "Friends and critics of teacher education are for it (student teaching) and consider it essential to any respectable teacher education program."[4]

Nevertheless, as Charles E. Silberman points out in Crisis in the Classroom, although student teaching is generally cited as the most valuable aspect of professional education, these beliefs do not provide a

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2 Florence B. Stratemeyer and Margaret Lindsey, Working With Student Teachers (New York: Teachers College Press, 1958), p. V.

3 National Education Association, National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards. Who's in Charge Here? Fixing Responsibilities for Student Teaching. Discussion Paper. Washington, D. C.: The Commission, 1966, p. 1.

4 George E. Dickson, Education Comment: On Student Teaching (Toledo, Ohio: The University of Toledo, 1967), p. 4.

basis for complacency; in fact, student teaching in some respects, may be doing more harm than good.[5] And the cooperating teacher, whom most agree has the greatest direct influence in shaping the attitudes, skills and ideas of a prospective teacher, "is the one factor in the teacher education program least likely to be under the influence or control of the teacher-training institution."[6] Experience does appear to indicate that the cooperating teacher exerts more influence on the student teacher than do the education professors with whom he has studied. However, little is known of the kind of influence the cooperating teacher exerts upon the student teacher, if, in reality, such influence does exist.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of cooperating teachers in shaping the attitudes of student teachers toward the teaching of English. The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Were the attitudes of the student teachers toward the teaching of English influenced by

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[5] Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), p. 451.

[6] Report of the Classroom Teachers National Study Conference on the Role of the Classroom Teacher in the Student Teaching Program. Washington, D. C.: Association of Classroom Teachers, National Education Association, 1970, pp. 1-2.

their cooperating teachers?

2. What kind of influence, if any, did the cooperating teachers exert upon the attitudes of student teachers toward the teaching of English?

The study was conducted during the Spring 1971 student teaching semester at the University of Kentucky. Student teachers were in their assigned schools every day for the full day from January 13, 1971 to May 7, 1971.

PROCEDURES

The research instrument for this study was a questionnaire consisting of twenty-four statements of belief concerning the teaching of English drawn from a seventy-five item questionnaire designed at the University of Illinois.[7] Six statements of belief related to the teaching of literature, six statements of belief related to the teaching of language, six statements of belief related to the teaching of grammar, and six statements of belief related to the teaching of composition. Statements of belief in each of these areas included

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[7] The original questionnaire was designed by Edward F. Wingler for use as the primary research instrument for his doctoral dissertation at the University of Illinois, under the direction of Jerry Walker, Alan Purves, John Erickson, and Bryant Fillion. Used by permission of Edward F. Wingler, Assistant Professor of English, George Peabody College for Teachers.

traditional thinking concerning the teaching of English (T) and progressive thinking concerning the teaching of English (P). See Figure 1.

The subjects consisted of thirty-four cooperating teachers and their thirty-four student teachers. Each subject was requested to rank the six statements of belief in each of the areas of literature, language, grammar and composition from one through six in order of agreement as a teacher of English, using each number only once. A rank of one indicated highest agreement; a rank of six indicated lowest agreement. The cooperating teachers responded to the questionnaire before the arrival of their student teachers. The student teachers responded to the questionnaire as a pre-test on student teaching orientation day at the University of Kentucky, the day before reporting to their schools. The student teachers again responded to the questionnaire as a post-test during the last week of student teaching.

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND RESULTS

When the data was complete, a paired *t*-test of the mean difference between the mean scores of the cooperating teachers and of the student teachers on each item of the pre-test was calculated and a paired *t*-test of the mean difference between the mean scores of the cooperating teachers and of the student teachers on each item of the post-test was calculated. A *t*-test for correlated

Figure 1
ATTITUDES TOWARD THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Directions: Within each of the four following groups of statements of belief, please rank the statements from 1 through 6 in order of agreement as a teacher of English.
A rank of 1 indicates HIGHEST AGREEMENT.
A rank of 6 indicates LOWEST AGREEMENT.

LITERATURE

1. (T) In literature secondary students should be required to acquire a knowledge of literary periods, the conventions of literary forms, and biographical information about important literary figures.
2. (P) An ever-present danger in the cognitive-analytical-academic approach to English is that students may become "emotionally" disadvantaged, unable to respond fully to literature or life.
3. (P) The construction of an historical, biographical, and/or geographical frame of reference for literature makes personal, affective response by students unlikely.
4. (T) Teaching literature essentially means teaching students the tools of literary criticism and their use.
5. (T) Significant thought along with sophisticated vocabulary, syntax, and construction are the criteria for excellence in literature.
6. (P) If literature is to be of value in shaping people's lives, the teacher must constantly relate life as it is represented in literature to real experience.

LANGUAGE

7. (T) Teachers of secondary English should make students aware of the dangers and inadequacies of non-standard dialects.
8. (P) We must deal with questions of usage in terms of what is appropriate rather than what is correct.
9. (P) For adolescents, dramatic enactment (through improvisation, role-playing, etc.) is a valuable way of developing control of a wide range of language behaviors.
10. (T) In school work the particular usage expected and required should be intelligently determined and clearly stated, and nothing else permitted to pass muster.
11. (P) Whatever our attitude to the forms of language, spoken or written, we have to leave the way

open for things of importance to students to be said. And that means ignoring correctness and dialect forms at such moments, because for the pupil the experience is all-important.

12. (T) A dictionary should not list words which are socially unacceptable or offensive.

GRAMMAR

13. (T) It is necessary to teach some systematized form of grammar to secondary school children.
14. (P) Grammar should be thought of as a description of choices open to a user of the language rather than as a set of prescriptive rules.
15. (T) Attacks upon the teaching of traditional grammar represent attempts to undermine standards and debase culture and should be resisted by the schools.
16. (T) The study of grammar of whatever variety has intrinsic and intellectual appeal for secondary students.
17. (P) Teachers of English should know enough about several systems of English grammar to be able to draw freely upon each as it is useful in the secondary classroom.
18. (T) Grammatical analysis is a short way to systematic understanding of the discrepancies between casual syntax and formal syntax.

COMPOSITION

19. (T) Expository writing assignments are the best way to arouse a student's interest in learning to express himself through writing.
20. (T) The study of traditional grammar has a demonstrable positive effect on student composition.
21. (P) Any method of making a writer feel that what he has written and how he has written it are worth serious attention is a good method.
22. (P) Only as a child expands his experience through expressing that which he sees and feels can he ultimately gain some reasonable control over the written language.
23. (P) Unless a child begins to feel that language is his, to record and shape his own experience, he will never come to write something vital and complex and mature.
24. (T) Expressing oneself through talk is of little value in learning to express oneself through writing.

data by part-scores of the difference between the mean scores of the student teachers on the pre-test and post-test was also calculated. The part-scores consisted of grouping the traditional and progressive items in each of the four parts of the questionnaire on the pre-test and on the post-test and of finding the difference of the mean scores within the groups in each area between the pre-test and the post-test taken by the student teachers. In part one: literature, items 1, 4, and 5 were considered traditional items; items 2, 3, and 6 were considered progressive items. In part two: language, items 1, 4, and 6 were considered traditional items; items 2, 3, and 5 were considered progressive items. In part three: grammar, items 1, 3, 4, and 6 were considered traditional items; items 2 and 5 were considered progressive items. In part four: composition, items 1, 2, and 6 were considered traditional items; items 3, 4, and 5 were considered progressive items. See Figure 1.

Were the attitudes of the student teachers toward the teaching of English influenced by their cooperating teachers?

The Attitudes Toward the Teaching of English pre-test showed a significant difference in attitude between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers on items 3, 4, 5, 11, 19, and 23 at the .05 level, as may be seen in Table 1. The Attitudes Toward the Teaching of English post-test showed no significant difference in attitude between the cooperating teachers and the student

Table 1
Mean Difference Between Means of Cooperating Teachers and Student Teachers on Each Item of the Pre-test

Item	Mean Cooperating Teachers N=34	S.D.	Pre-test Mean Student Teachers N=34	S.D.	Pre-test Mean Difference	t Paired
1	4.00	1.60	4.29	1.62	-.32	.91
2	3.53	1.35	4.06	1.50	-.41	1.43
3	3.50	1.31	4.24	1.16	-.91	2.99*
4	4.38	1.35	3.44	1.46	+1.00	3.22*
5	4.29	1.53	3.65	1.47	+.79	2.42*
6	1.21	.91	1.32	1.04	-.05	.15
7	4.18	1.19	4.21	1.39	-.12	.37
8	2.44	.70	2.15	1.16	+.41	1.95
9	2.62	.95	2.74	1.11	-.06	.22
10	5.06	.89	4.76	1.39	+.15	.57
11	1.38	.89	2.03	1.06	-.59	2.18*
12	5.32	.81	5.06	1.07	+.09	.46
13	3.88	1.23	3.35	1.18	+.18	.58
14	1.94	.98	1.76	1.18	+.29	1.36
15	5.09	1.38	5.35	1.20	-.32	1.63
16	4.74	1.02	4.79	1.09	-.24	.89
17	1.59	.82	2.18	1.03	+.41	1.49
18	3.76	1.13	3.47	1.08	+.32	1.27
19	4.38	.82	3.21	1.37	+1.18	4.60*
20	4.76	1.21	4.82	1.11	-.03	.14
21	2.09	.93	2.56	1.60	-.29	.91
22	2.18	1.36	2.53	1.21	-.29	.90
23	2.18	.94	2.56	1.28	-.65	2.64*
24	5.24	1.13	5.29	1.06	-.15	.62

*For 33 degrees of freedom the probability of obtaining a t value greater than 2.04 is less than .05.

teachers on items 3, 4, 5, 11, and 23 at the .05 level, as may be seen in Table 2. The post-test also reflected less of a difference in attitude between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers on item 19 although this difference remained significant at the .05 level, as may be seen in Table 2. The post-test reflected significant differences in attitude between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers on items 13 and 24 at the .05 level, as may be seen in Table 2. No significant difference of attitude between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers on items 13 and 14 had been reflected on the pre-test, as may be seen in Table 1.

That five of the six items on the questionnaire reflected significant differences in attitude between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers on these items on the pre-test, but no significant difference in attitude between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers on these items on the post-test seems to suggest, then, that the cooperating teachers did exert an influence in shaping the attitudes of the student teachers toward the teaching of English. That the additional item among the six items reflected less of a difference, although still a significant difference, on the post-test seems also to support this view.

Table 2
Mean Difference Between Means of Cooperating Teachers and Student Teachers on Each Item of the Post-test

Item	Mean Cooperating Teachers N=34	S.D.	Post-test Mean Student Teachers N=34	S.D.	Post-test Mean Difference	t Paired
1	4.00	1.60	3.88	1.39	+.21	.75
2	3.53	1.35	3.24	1.78	+.41	1.40
3	3.50	1.31	4.15	1.31	-.65	1.82
4	4.38	1.35	4.03	1.59	+.24	.69
5	4.29	1.53	3.97	1.49	+.38	1.11
6	1.21	.91	1.35	.92	+.09	.39
7	4.18	1.19	4.12	1.12	+.12	.48
8	2.44	.70	2.21	1.15	+.32	1.30
9	2.62	.95	2.56	1.02	+.19	.40
10	5.06	.89	5.12	.98	-.03	.13
11	1.38	.89	1.59	.82	-.18	.74
12	5.32	.81	5.29	1.03	-.18	.94
13	3.88	1.23	3.00	1.28	+.68	2.26*
14	1.94	.98	1.65	.85	+.29	1.28
15	5.09	1.38	5.44	.96	-.47	1.88
16	4.74	1.02	5.18	.87	-.38	1.52
17	1.59	.82	2.03	.94	-.32	1.59
18	3.76	1.13	3.59	.89	+.38	1.48
19	4.38	.82	3.79	1.20	+.59	2.79*
20	4.76	1.21	4.76	.99	+.06	.28
21	2.09	.93	2.12	1.23	.00	.00
22	2.18	1.36	2.00	1.02	+.18	.58
23	2.18	.94	2.59	1.37	-.44	1.52
24	5.24	1.13	5.68	.59	-.35	2.24*

*For 33 degrees of freedom the probability of obtaining a t value greater than 2.04 is less than .05.

That two items on the questionnaire reflected no significant differences in attitude between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers on these items on the pre-test, but a significant difference in attitude between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers on the post-test seems to suggest that factors in addition to that of the cooperating teacher are also exerted upon the student teacher during his student teaching experience.

What kind of influence, if any, did the cooperating teachers exert upon the attitudes of the student teachers toward the teaching of English?

The findings related to the part-scores of the Attitudes Toward the Teaching of English questionnaire show that in every area of the questionnaire the student teachers' attitude toward the teaching of English was in highest agreement with the progressive parts of each of the areas of the questionnaire on both the pre-test and the post-test, as may be seen in Table 3. The findings also show a significant difference in agreement among the student teachers between the pre-test and the post-test in the area parts of composition/traditional, literature/progressive, and composition/progressive at the .05 level, as may be seen in Table 3. These findings reflect the attitudes of the student teachers became significantly more progressive within these areas.

Table 3
Differences Between Means of Student Teachers on the Traditional and Progressive Parts in Each Area of the Pre-test and Post-test

Area Part	Pre-test Mean N=34	S.D.	Post-test Mean N=34	S.D.	t
Literature/traditional	11.38	2.09	11.88	2.51	-1.42
Language/traditional	14.03	2.07	14.53	1.11	-1.37
Grammar/traditional	17.03	1.68	17.26	1.19	-0.75
Composition/traditional	13.32	1.95	14.24	1.23	-2.37*
Literature/progressive	9.62	2.09	8.74	2.35	2.77*
Language/progressive	6.91	1.93	6.35	1.15	1.69
Grammar/progressive	3.94	1.65	3.62	1.07	1.23
Composition/progressive	7.64	1.63	6.71	1.27	2.83*

*For 33 degrees of freedom the probability of obtaining a t value greater than 2.04 is less than .05.

Table 1 shows the interesting finding that the cooperating teachers reflected the more progressive attitude on all of the significantly different items between the cooperating teachers and the student teachers on the Attitudes Toward the Teaching of English pre-test. Table 2 shows the additional finding that the cooperating teachers again reflected the more progressive attitude toward the teaching of English on the post-test in item 13 which was significantly different at the .05 level; the student teachers did reflect a more progressive attitude toward the teaching of English on the post-test in item 24 which was significantly different at the .05 level, although the response of the cooperating teachers on this item was also progressive in attitude.

These findings appear to suggest, then, that the influence exerted by the cooperating teachers upon the student teachers caused the student teachers to become more progressive in their attitudes toward the teaching of English.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study seem to indicate that the influence of cooperating teachers in shaping the attitudes of student teachers toward the teaching of English is very real. In this study, the cooperating teachers appear to have influenced the student teachers in the direction of a more progressive attitude toward the teaching of English.

The results of this investigation indicate the need for teacher training institutions to take care in the selection and training of cooperating teachers in English if the student teaching phase is to be an integral part of an institution's teacher education program, and to ensure that the teacher-training institution exerts a degree of continuing influence upon the cooperating teacher.

This study also suggests a real need for further research into the influences upon student teachers in English during their student teaching experience.